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THESIS

**STABILIZATION LESSONS LEARNED FROM
SIERRA LEONE**

by

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December 2013

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STABILIZATION LESSONS LEARNED FROM SIERRA LEONE

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the near failure and ultimate success of the United Nations mission in Sierra Leone. This operation is an interesting case study as it followed failed attempts at regional peacekeeping, and in many ways mirrored them, but ultimately ended the conflict. This was the last operation the United Nations (UN) started before the Brahimi report and was effectively a tipping point for UN operations in general.

This research analyzes the strategy and actions of the UN force as the situation progressively deteriorated to near total failure, and the changes made to both that led to the dramatic turnaround in a short period of time. The overall strategy of the UN mission, mandates and their interpretation, troop levels, and responses to threats are considered. The shift from a peacekeeping to peace-enforcement strategy and the simultaneous shift in tactics to favor aggressive response to threats earned the credibility necessary to deter aggression. This underscores the need to tailor strategy, mandate to the specific conditions on the ground, and allow the force the flexibility to adapt quickly.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AFRC	Armed Forces Revolutionary Council
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration
DPKO	UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations
CCP	Commission for the Consolidation of Peace
CDF	Civil Defense Force
CMC	Cease-fire Monitoring Committee
CMRDD	Commission for the Management of Strategic Resources, National Reconstruction, and Development
CONOPS	Concept of Operations
DFC	Deputy Force Commander
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ECOMOG	ECOWAS Monitoring Group
JIC	Joint Implementation Committee
JMC	Joint Monitoring Committee
MOD	Ministry of Defense
NPFL	National Patriotic Front of Liberia
OAU	Organization of African Unity
PSC	Private Security Company
RUF	Revolutionary United Front
RSLAF	Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces
SLA	Army of Sierra Leone
SLP	Sierra Leone Police
SRSG	Special Representative of the Secretary-General
SSR	Security Sector Reform
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNAMSIL	United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone
UNOMSIL	United Nations Monitoring Mission in Sierra Leone
UNSC	United Nations Security Council

UNSG
UNSCR

United Nations Secretary-General
United Nations Security Council Resolution

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION

Sierra Leone is often seen as a turning point for United Nations (UN) peace operations. From 1997 to 2000, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) tried and failed to implement cease-fires and resolve the conflict.¹ After Nigeria and the ECOWAS mission announced their plans to pull out in 2000, the UN launched a mission to replace it.² This mission was initially unsuccessful, leading to near failure in May of 2000.³ Between May and October of 2000, the UN made significant changes to the operation and essentially started over. This re-organized mission was successful. By January 2002 the civil war was over and Sierra Leone was able to hold peaceful, democratic elections.⁴ How did the UN strategy in Sierra Leone change between May 2000 and October 2000 and how did these changes lead to stabilization and ultimately success of the overall mission? What are the implications of this for future peace operations?

B. IMPORTANCE

Since the end of the Cold War, intra-state conflict has greatly increased and now poses the greatest threat to peace and stability. The superpowers are no longer willing to prop up regimes to keep them in their spheres. Unlike the pre-WWII era, there are no

¹ Adekeye Adebajo, *Building Peace in West Africa: Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea-Bissau* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2002); Eric G. Berman and Melissa T. Labonte, "Ch 3 Sierra Leone," in *Twenty First Century Peace Operations*, ed. William J. Durch, (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2006), 141–227.

² Lise Morje Howard, *UN Peacekeeping in Civil Wars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 303; Adebajo, *Building Peace in West Africa: Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea-Bissau*; Adekeye Adebajo and David Keen, "Sierra Leone," in Mats Berdal and Spyros Economides, eds., *United Nations Interventionism, 1991–2004* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 256–261.

³ Michael W. Doyle and Nicholas Sambanis, *Making War and Building Peace: United Nations Peace Operations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 318; Roland Paris, *At War's End: Building Peace After Civil Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Adebajo and Keen, "Sierra Leone," 261.

⁴ Howard, *UN Peacekeeping in Civil Wars*, 303–305.

longer colonial powers seeking to claim weak states or pull them into a sphere of influence. The UN is now the organization most responsible for maintaining peace and stability in the world. The UN has struggled to answer the calls to do something about these intra-state conflicts. A series of failures and limited successes in the 1990s have shaken confidence in the UN and shown the need for a more effective strategy. Lessons learned from Sierra Leone could be used to improve strategy in future peace operations.

C. LITERATURE REVIEW

There is a great deal of literature that focuses on peace operations. Some studies suggest that peacekeepers make peace more likely to last,⁵ while even those that doubt the long-term effectiveness of peacekeeping have noted that peacekeepers make settlements more likely and recurrences of violence less severe.⁶ The most recent generation of research stresses a whole-of-government approach that for the most part includes aspects of security, socio-economic, governance, and truth and reconciliation, in response to the total breakdown of state institutions that is now common in post-conflict situations.⁷ There are multiple authors who focus on UN peace operations in general and they will be discussed first. There are fewer authors who focus on Sierra Leone before, after, and during the UN intervention. These authors and their research will be discussed in more detail.

The importance of establishing security as a foundation for rebuilding state institutions is a theme throughout these analyses of peacekeeping missions. Some have argued that outside guarantees are critical to a peace process. Barbara Walter finds that peace settlements, demobilization, and disarming are much more likely to last when

⁵ Virginia Page Fortna, *Does Peacekeeping Work?: Shaping Belligerents' Choices After Civil War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 16; Doyle and Sambanis, *Making War and Building Peace: United Nations Peace Operations*, 131–132.

⁶ Paul F. Diehl and J. Michael Greig, “The Peacekeeping–Peacemaking Dilemma,” *International Studies Quarterly* 49 (2005): 643.

⁷ Robert C. Orr, *Winning the Peace: an American Strategy for Post-conflict Reconstruction* (Washington, DC: CSIS Press, 2004), 11; Paris, *At War's End: Building Peace After Civil Conflict*, 19; Doyle and Sambanis, *Making War and Building Peace: United Nations Peace Operations*, 338–342.

guaranteed by an outside party and backed by the credible threat of force.⁸ Without this guarantee it is too risky for them to give up their own military force.⁹ This suggests that providing a credible force on the ground is necessary, but does not give clear guidance as to what it are supposed to do once deployed.

There has been considerable debate as to whether UN forces should be neutral or impartial and what exactly those terms mean in regard to peace operations. A neutral force is one that will not take sides in a dispute. An impartial force does not favor one party over the other, but will intervene if necessary. Traditional UN operations were shaped around three key concepts: the consent of all parties, minimum use of force as a last resort or in self-defense, and impartiality.¹⁰ Some have noted that as international norms have changed, what is considered permissible in peace operations has also changed.¹¹ The UN and the international community have been increasingly pressured to intervene in disputes where all parties have not yet reached a viable peace agreement or cease fire. Some have argued that attempting to maintain impartiality in an active conflict has the effect of prolonging the conflict.¹² They also conclude that in the absence of consent a mission cannot be both limited and impartial and still achieve success.¹³ This suggests that the force should clearly align itself with one side and follow a more aggressive strategy when confronted with a peace enforcement rather than peacekeeping mission. Another aspect of this debate is whether or not the force truly understands whether it is to be neutral or impartial, active or passive. If the focus is on maintaining consent and limiting the use of force then the mandate of impartiality effectively changes

⁸ Barbara F. Walter, "The Critical Barrier to Civil War Settlement," *International Organization* 51, no. 3 (Summer 1997): 336.

⁹ Barbara F. Walter, *Committing to Peace: the Successful Settlement of Civil War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 3.

¹⁰ Dominick Donald, "Neutral is Not Impartial: The Confusing Legacy of Traditional Peace Operations Thinking," *Armed Forces and Society* 29, no. 3 (Spring 2003): 415.

¹¹ Martha Finnemore, "Constructing Norms of Humanitarian Intervention," In Peter J. Katzenstein, ed., *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 181.

¹² Richard K. Betts, "The Delusion of Impartial Intervention," *Foreign Affairs* 73, no. 6 (November/December 1994): 32.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 21.

to something much more like neutrality, limiting its effectiveness.¹⁴ This suggests that what the force believes its mandate to be is as important as what the security council intends it to be.

Several authors address how peacekeepers are supposed to affect the conflict environment. Michael Doyle and Lise Morje Howard come close to addressing the question of strategy. Doyle agrees that peacekeeping “reduces the opportunity for insurgency and enhances incentives for peace,” but adds that peacekeeping is only as credible as the mandate allows.¹⁵ He maintains that matching the mandate to the political and military conditions in the country is the most important contributor to success, adding that the mandate must be well executed to be effective, and that peacekeepers must be able to adapt to the conditions of the particular conflict in which they are involved.¹⁶ Howard echoes this need for adaptation, stressing first level learning, or the ability of the force to adapt to the situation on the ground.¹⁷ However, neither discusses specific strategies for specific political and military conditions.

Virginia Page Fortna comes closer to discussing details of the strategies peacekeepers should use on the ground. Fortna argues that peacekeepers change the incentives of the combatant parties, prevent the hijacking of the political process, mitigate accidental violations of the peace agreement, and serve as a source of trusted information for all sides – in addition to providing security. This is done either by acting as a credible threat to any party that breaks the peace, or serving as a tripwire force that will bring a credible force in if threatened. By providing security, the peacekeepers create a safe environment that will allow moderate leaders to emerge.¹⁸ Using peacekeepers as mediators and to ensure security could be considered a strategy implemented by the UN. Sierra Leone was one area where the UN attempted to use this strategy.

¹⁴ Dominick Donald, “Neutral is Not Impartial: The Confusing Legacy of Traditional Peace Operations Thinking,” 435.

¹⁵ Doyle and Sambanis, *Making War and Building Peace: United Nations Peace Operations*, 49.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 303.

¹⁷ Howard, *UN Peacekeeping in Civil Wars*, 328.

¹⁸ Fortna, *Does Peacekeeping Work?: Shaping Belligerents’ Choices After Civil War*, 16; Doyle and Sambanis, *Making War and Building Peace: United Nations Peace Operations*, 49–50.

The poor performance of the early UN operation in Sierra Leone has been blamed on a range of factors including leadership, organization, equipment and resources, political will, and mandate. These factors contributed to an overall lack of security. There is a clear consensus that the UN failed to provide adequate security for itself or the population. Rebels, renegades, and militias continued to operate throughout the country with impunity, culminating in May of 2000, when the UN lost control of the entire country and was nearly overrun as it fell back to the capital.¹⁹ This led the UN to implement a new strategy resulting in a dramatic turnaround: violence greatly decreased and a new peace agreement and ceasefire were signed.²⁰

There are several overlapping explanations of the turnaround. Many scholars credit the British intervention. This camp points to Britain's use of force,²¹ leadership, and/or support to the UN operation as key causal factors.²² A significant increase in UN force size in conjunction with British support has also been suggested as a multivariate explanation.²³ Another camp argues that organizational learning and internal changes in the UN operation were the keys to success.²⁴

Some such as Adebajo and Fortna believe that a series of complex mutually reinforcing factors led to the end of the civil war. Adebajo conducted a detailed study of the Sierra Leone civil war and has concluded that six changes led to peace. First, the Guineans inflicted heavy casualties on the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in cross-border operations. Second, denial of access to the diamond trade weakened the RUF. Third, international pressure on Libya, Liberia, and Burkina Faso cut off their support of the RUF. Fourth, better funding and a clear enforcement mandate strengthened United

¹⁹ Doyle and Sambanis, *Making War and Building Peace: United Nations Peace Operations*, 318; Adebajo and Keen, "Sierra Leone," 261; Paris, *At War's End: Building Peace After Civil Conflict*; Fortna, *Does Peacekeeping Work? : Shaping Belligerents' Choices After Civil War*, 137–138.

²⁰ Berman and Labonte, "Sierra Leone," 161, 200–204.

²¹ Doyle and Sambanis, *Making War and Building Peace: United Nations Peace Operations*, 318; Fortna, *Does Peacekeeping Work? : Shaping Belligerents' Choices After Civil War*, 138.

²² Oliver Ramsbotham, Tom Woodhouse, and Hugh Mall, *Contemporary Conflict Resolution* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), 153.

²³ Paris, *At War's End: Building Peace After Civil Conflict*, 222–223; Fortna, *Does Peacekeeping Work? : Shaping Belligerents' Choices After Civil War*, 124.

²⁴ Howard, *UN Peacekeeping in Civil Wars*, 306.

Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL). Fifth, the British destruction of the West Side Boys and training of a new Sierra Leone Army (SLA) improved security, and sixth, many in the rebel movement became war weary and the loss of Sankoh further cut their motivation to fight.²⁵ While these factors appear to be beneficial and mutually supporting, they may do a better job of explaining how a lasting peace was reached than how the sudden increase in security happened. Fortna also believes that several factors led to peace in Sierra Leone. These included internal fracturing of the RUF, decreased support for the RUF from Charles Taylor, attacks on the RUF by other actors, and the UN mission's newfound ability to deter aggression.²⁶ Many of Fortna's factors overlap Adebajo's, but unlike Adebajo, Fortna places considerable emphasis on the UN's ability to deter. She places some credit for this on the more aggressive mandate as does Adebajo, but she also credits a shift in strategy on the ground including a willingness to fight when necessary. She also states that the British intervention increased the UN's deterrent effect, because they were now backed up by an "over the horizon force."²⁷

The pace and timing of the turnaround rule out many of these explanations. Denial of the diamond trade was not mandated until July 2000 and cutting off direct support would have taken longer to affect the situation on the ground than was actually the case. A change in UN leadership also does not seem to be a plausible explanation, since Lieutenant-General Daniel Opande did not replace Jetley as the Force Commander until November, by which time the turnaround was nearly complete. Similarly, organizational changes were begun in September, but were not fully implemented until later in the year, too late to explain the turnaround.²⁸ The Guinean assault similarly came too late to have contributed significantly to the turnaround.²⁹ Changes in resources and

²⁵ Adebajo and Keen, "Sierra Leone," 265–267. Eric Berman also echoes most of these causes. Berman and Labonte, "Sierra Leone," 202.

²⁶ Fortna, *Does Peacekeeping Work? : Shaping Belligerents' Choices After Civil War*, 137–139.

²⁷ Fortna, *Does Peacekeeping Work? : Shaping Belligerents' Choices After Civil War*, 138.

²⁸ United Nations, Seventh Report on the Secretary General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, Report, New York: United Nations, October 31, 2000; United Nations, Report of the Security Council Mission to Sierra Leone, Report, New York: United Nations, October 16, 2000.

²⁹ United Nations, Seventh Report on the Secretary General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone; United Nations, Eighth Report on the Secretary General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, Report, New York: United Nations, December 15, 2000.

equipment are not a likely cause, since the most significant increases occurred after the security situation changed. The Security Council sent a mission to Sierra Leone in October to investigate UNAMSIL's problems. The investigation still found logistical shortfalls and inadequately equipped military units.³⁰

Some possible explanations remain that should be considered more closely. Changes in troop levels may have correlated to changes in the security level, but did not appear to drive them. At the lowest point in early May of 2000, the force bottomed out at about 8,700 and only reached 9,495 by mid-May, when the initial crisis had abated. Between May and August the force increased to 12,440. Between August and December 2000, the UN force numbered between 12,400 and 12,500. In early 2001, the force dropped back to 10,300 again with no security repercussions. The force did not rise above 12,500 again until mid-2001 and did not peak until it topped 16,000 late in 2001.³¹ Clearly, the crisis occurred and ended before most of the troop buildup took effect, but perhaps there was a significant enough change in troop levels between May and December to warrant further investigation. Troop levels and density, in addition to how they were used and where they were deployed need to be investigated further as possible explanatory factors.

³⁰ United Nations, Report of the Security Council Mission to Sierra Leone, Report, New York: United Nations, October 16, 2000.

³¹ All numbers are from the Fourth through Twelfth UN Report on the Secretary General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone. United Nations, Fourth Report on the Secretary General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, Report, New York: United Nations, May 19, 2000; United Nations, Fifth Report on the Secretary General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, Report, New York: United Nations, July 31, 2000; United Nations, Sixth Report on the Secretary General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, Report, New York: United Nations, August 24, 2000; United Nations, Seventh Report on the Secretary General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone; United Nations, Eighth Report on the Secretary General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone; United Nations, Ninth Report on the Secretary General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, Report, New York: United Nations, March 14, 2001; United Nations Tenth Report on the Secretary General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, Report, New York: United Nations, June 25, 2001; United Nations, Eleventh Report on the Secretary General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, Report, New York: United Nations, September 7, 2001; United Nations, Twelfth Report on the Secretary General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, Report, New York: United Nations, December 13, 2001.

The change in mandate in August also could have been a factor.³² The original mandate was under Chapter VII, but was written as a peacekeeping rather than peace enforcement operation.³³ In August, the mandate was changed by UNSCR 1313, which was very strongly worded and explicitly spelled out the expectations for the force on the ground.³⁴ The mandate change could be considered a factor if it could be closely correlated with a change in security, but changing interpretations of the mandate may have had a more direct effect as the force was already operating under a stronger mandate, UNSCR 1289, as of February 2000.³⁵ How this mandate was interpreted does warrant further study, especially in regard to Fortna's statements about a changed attitude and strategy.

The UK's support of UNAMSIL and the Sierra Leone Army has been widely accepted as a critical factor in the turnaround, but this support was not the only factor. British troops safeguarded parts of the capital and the airport at Lungi during the crisis.³⁶ The UK task force represented an over the horizon force and did act to free their own captured troops from the Westside Boys, but did not conduct operations against the RUF outside of the capital and Lungi areas.³⁷ The British provided command and control support, logistical support, and valuable advice to the UN force during and in the weeks after the crisis. While the British supported the UN force, the UN's actions at the tactical level still determined whether or not they were respected and viewed as credible by the

³² Numerous sources have identified the original mandate as being insufficient and based upon the assumption that the force would be monitoring and assisting with a cease-fire agreement between competent and well intentioned parties. These include Adebajo and Keen, "Sierra Leone," 265–267; Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, and Mall, *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*, 152; Berman and Labonte, "Sierra Leone," 202.

No source has identified the more aggressive mandate as the sole reason for the turnaround.

³³ United Nations, United Nations Security Council Resolution 1270, Resolution, New York: United Nations, October 22, 1999.

³⁴ United Nations, United Nations Security Council Resolution 1313, Resolution, New York: United Nations, August 4, 2000.

³⁵ United Nations, United Nations Security Council Resolution 1289, Resolution, New York: United Nations, February 4, 2000. UNSCR 1289 was stronger than 1270, but all were under Chapter VII.

³⁶ Olonisakin, Funmi. *Peacekeeping in Sierra Leone: The Story of UNAMSIL*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2008, 63–65.

³⁷ Lansana Gberie, *A Dirty War in West Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 174.

rebels. This credibility was crucial as it was the UN force that would guarantee the safety of the RUF and AFRC once they began to disarm in 2001. This thesis will examine the strategy of the UN force in the time leading up to the crisis and the early days of the turnaround.

D. PROBLEMS AND HYPOTHESES

The hypothesis is that the shift to a more aggressive peace enforcement strategy was a significant factor in the UN turnaround in Sierra Leone, as the actual conditions on the ground were not yet conducive to peacekeeping. In order to function effectively in this environment and later be effective in peacekeeping, the UN force had to change its strategy and tactics. I will show that the UN's own actions on the ground in the weeks after the crisis were critical to establishing credibility. Once the UN force started considering its situation from a tactical and operational point of view it took actions that gained it credibility.

E. METHODS AND SOURCES

In order to determine how the UN mission gained credibility and show that increased credibility led to the reestablishment of security, I use process-tracing of UN peacekeeping operations in Sierra Leone in the summer of 2000 in order to determine what changes most directly coincided with the turnaround of the operation. I focus on operational and tactical changes in three areas: the location, distribution, and density of the security force; the force's organizational and physical capabilities; and the force's response to threats and acts of violence. I will determine which changes in these factors most closely correlated with changes in security, specifically attacks on the UN force and the government of Sierra Leone. Evidence is drawn from primary sources, such as UN reports, newspaper and magazine articles, and status reports from watchdog groups and think tanks, as well as secondary sources.

F. THESIS OVERVIEW

Following the first introductory chapter, Chapter II will analyze the security situation in the months leading up to the crisis. It shows how and why UNAMSIL initially failed to establish credibility as a peacekeeping force and how this led to the crisis in early May 2000. The argument is that the UN based its original mandate, strategy, operational plans and posture on the Lomé Peace Accord, despite clear evidence that the conditions envisioned in the accord would not exist. It then failed to adjust adequately to the reality on the ground and thus failed to deter aggression. This failure to establish credibility or deter aggression led directly to the crisis. The third chapter shows that in response to the crisis, UNAMSIL made fundamental changes at the strategic and tactical levels that established its credibility and deterred attacks. Soon after the crisis UNAMSIL began to consider the conditions on the ground first when making plans, leading to new priorities, objectives, and tactics. This led UNAMSIL to change the disposition of its troops to better secure itself and the government controlled areas, and to resist RUF advances and retake key territory when necessary. Additional troops and organizational improvements enabled it to defeat the RUF militarily when necessary.

II. THE CRISIS

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter shows that UNAMSIL based its original mandate, strategy, operational plans and posture on the Lomé Peace Accord despite clear evidence that the conditions envisioned in the accord would not exist. It then failed to adjust adequately to the reality on the ground thereby failing to establish its credibility, which in turn undermined its ability to deter aggression. This failure manifested itself through a series of attacks that increased in frequency and severity with each failure to react appropriately.

By the 1990s, the Sierra Leone state was nearly collapsed. Economic decline in the 1970s led to financial ruin and the deterioration of most state institutions. The army was both oversized and starved for resources, leading to its institutional weakness and disloyalty. Military coups in 1985, 1992 and 1996 led to further state deterioration.³⁸ Civil war began in 1991, when the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), led by former corporal Foday Sankoh, invaded from Liberia.³⁹ Sankoh and many other early members of the RUF received training in guerilla warfare in Libya and Burkina Faso, alongside Charles Taylor and his National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL).⁴⁰ The RUF was supported by Taylor, Libya and Burkina Faso throughout the war, which was crucial in its acquiring arms by selling diamonds.⁴¹ The expressed goal of the RUF was the overthrow of the government, but control of the diamond areas was its primary

³⁸ Adekeye Adebajo, *Building Peace in West Africa: Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea-Bissau* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2002), 81–82.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 82.

⁴⁰ Adebajo, *Building Peace in West Africa: Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea-Bissau*; Lansana Gberie, *A Dirty War in West Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 52–54.

⁴¹ Eric G. Berman, “Arming the Revolutionary United Front,” *African Security Review* 10, no. 1 (2001); Adebajo 48; Gberie, *A Dirty War in West Africa*, 63; Eric G. Berman and Melissa T. Labonte, “Sierra Leone,” in William J. Durch, ed., *Twenty First Century Peace Operations* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2006), 156–158.

objective.⁴² It controlled all or some of the diamond mining areas throughout the war, which provided a key source of funding and in incentive to keep fighting, even as its harsh treatment of the people alienated the local population. In 1997, the newly elected government of Ahmed Tejan Kabbah was overthrown by a faction of the army, which installed itself in power as the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) and invited the RUF to join its government. An implosion of authority followed.

In response, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) deployed the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) to reverse the coup and support the elected government against its own army and the RUF, which were increasingly difficult to distinguish from one another.⁴³ ECOMOG's tactics were very aggressive, but ultimately only partially effective. Kabbah was restored to power in March 1998, after which the Sierra Leone Army (SLA) was led by Maxwell Khobe, the Nigerian general in charge of the ECOMOG mission. As Chief of the Defense Staff, General Khobe was charged with defending the Sierra Leone government and re-building the SLA.⁴⁴ The AFRC was split from the SLA, pushed out of Freetown, and became a rebel group aligned with the RUF, operating mostly in the north while the RUF continued to hold the eastern diamond areas. The AFRC/RUF alliance launched a surprise offensive in December 1998, nearly taking Freetown from ECOMOG and the SLA before being beaten back. In February 1999, Nigeria transitioned from military to democratic rule, and its new president, Olesegun Obasanjo, informed all interested parties that Nigerian forces, which comprised 90% of ECOMOG, would be withdrawn from Sierra Leone within months. The United States, Nigeria, Guinea, and others sought a negotiated settlement between a weak Kabbah government and a still strong RUF in anticipation of the withdrawal.⁴⁵

⁴² Lansana Gberie, *A Dirty War in West Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 6.

⁴³ Adebajo, *Building Peace in West Africa: Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea-Bissau*, 87.

⁴⁴ Adebajo, *Building Peace in West Africa: Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea-Bissau*, 88–89; Gberie, *A Dirty War in West Africa*, 63.

⁴⁵ Berman and Labonte, "Sierra Leone," 160.

The result was the Lomé Peace Accord, which left the RUF in a very good position. There was a blanket amnesty. The RUF, which was to transition to a political party, received four guaranteed ministerial positions and four deputy ministerial positions. Foday Sankoh was made vice president and chair of the Commission for the Management of Strategic Resources, National Reconstruction, and Development (CMRDD). This put him in control of the official diamond trade. In addition, Lomé placed few constraints on the RUF. It created multi-level monitoring organizations, including the Cease-fire Monitoring Committee (CMC) at the provincial and district level, the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) at the national level, and the Joint Implementation Committee (JIC) at the international level (headed by ECOWAS).⁴⁶ But it did not provide a mechanism for punishing cheating, which was rife. Under the agreement an ECOMOG/UN peacekeeping force was to assist the government in executing a disarmament program, which was to begin within six weeks of the signing of the agreement—an unreasonable schedule. ECOMOG, even though it had publicly stated it would withdraw, was tasked with peacekeeping, security of the state and protecting UN personnel involved in the DDR process.⁴⁷ The RUF was in a strong position to win elections by persuading voters that this was the only way to stop the killing (as the NPFL had done in Liberia in 1997), which required it to maintain its war fighting capability in violation of Lomé.

When the Lomé Peace Accords were signed in July 1999, the security situation in Sierra Leone was chaotic. The remnants of the SLA officially numbered 7,000, but its actual effective size was difficult to determine. The Civil Defence Force (CDF), numbering 15,000, had congealed from village level civil defense forces that emerged spontaneously during the war. Its leader, Chief Hinga Norman, had been named Deputy Defense Minister by the Kabbah government.⁴⁸ The AFRC numbered 6,000, and was still

⁴⁶ The Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone, Peace Agreement Between The Government Of Sierra Leone and The Revolutionary United Front Of Sierra Leone. <http://www.sierra-leone.org/lomeaccord.html>.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Accord Sierra Leone Project, *Paying the Price: the Sierra Leone Peace Process*, (Accord issue 9, 2000), London, 2000. <http://www.c-r.org/our-work/accord/sierra-leone/profiles.php>.

concentrated in the north. The RUF numbered 15,000 and still controlled the diamond mining areas of the east, putting it in a good position to continue diamond and weapons smuggling. The government controlled only the western area around the capital. ECOMOG had drawn down to approximately 10,000 troops in the capital area and the south with no firm agreement to remain.⁴⁹

B. CREATING UNAMSIL

While the UN, U.S., and UK all played roles in negotiating the Lomé agreement and approving the follow on UNAMSIL force, there were near fatal disconnects between the agreement that was signed, ECOMOG's planned withdrawal, and the follow on UN mission. When Lomé was signed, there was uncertainty over Nigeria's continued role and by extension ECOMOG's continued existence.⁵⁰ The U.S. believed that ECOMOG could be much more forceful than a UN force and hence better able to provide security, and many in the U.S. government thought Obasanjo could be persuaded to continue Nigerian participation with financial incentives.⁵¹ Lomé also called for ECOWAS to send troops from two more countries within 30 days. Since the chairman of ECOWAS, Gnassingbe Eyadema, headed the Lomé peace conference, and representatives from ECOWAS nations including President Obasanjo participated in the negotiations and signed as witnesses, there was reason to hope ECOMOG would remain until the country had stabilized. The UK took a different view. It believed that a UN force was necessary and ECOMOG was not capable of restoring peace.⁵² The U.S., UK, and UN were under considerable public pressure to do something about Sierra Leone.⁵³ The UNSC assumed

⁴⁹ Adebajo, *Building Peace in West Africa: Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea-Bissau*, 91.

⁵⁰ Berman and Labonte, "Sierra Leone," 160.

⁵¹ Ibid, 162.

⁵² Ibid, 163.

⁵³ Rubin, Elizabeth, "Saving Sierra Leone, At a Price," *New York Times*. February 4, 1999, accessed 01 September 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/1999/02/04/opinion/saving-sierra-leone-at-a-price.html?ref=sierraleone&pagewanted=1> ; Christopher S. Wren, "U.N. Is Ready to Consider Sending Peacekeepers to Sierra Leone," *New York Times*, September 30, 1999, accessed August 13, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/1999/09/30/world/un-is-ready-to-consider-sending-peacekeepers-to-sierra-leone.html?ref=sierraleone>; McGrea, Chris. "Cook grapples with Africa's Long Struggle to Find Peace." *The Guardian*, March 14, 1999, accessed September 01, 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/1999/mar/14/sierraleone>; Rubin,

ECOMOG would continue to provide security as called for in Lomé when it approved the mandate creating UNAMSIL. The stabilization plan laid out in Lomé partially explains this assumption. The plan was very optimistic and relied on the rapid influx of money and people as well as the full cooperation of the belligerents. Two more ECOMOG units were to deploy within 30 days. ECOMOG was to have a new mandate within 31 days and begin phased withdrawals as new SLA units were able to take over from them. DDR was to begin immediately and complete in 60 days.⁵⁴ Ideally this would mean that there would be no more large armed groups that would require a large force to deter. If events went as planned, there would be no problem.

UNAMSIL was conceived as a tool to support Lomé. The mission's physical makeup and concept of operations (CONOPS) were shaped by the peace agreement. The UN Secretary General (UNSG), Kofi Annan described UNAMSIL's mission in August 1999:

The main purpose of the United Nations force would be to assist the Government in carrying out its programme to disarm and demobilize all former Combatants and thereafter to help create the conditions of confidence and stability required for the smooth implementation of the peace process. The United Nations force would not be mandated to ensure the security of Freetown and the international airport at Lungi or to provide protection for the Government. Those vital tasks, as well as any operations against rogue elements unwilling to participate in the peace process, are expected to remain the responsibility of ECOMOG.⁵⁵

The original force as presented by the UNSG consisted of 6 infantry battalions and a 200 man Quick Reaction Force (QRF). Each infantry battalion was to protect a DDR Center and its associated reception centers.⁵⁶ Deployment sites were based on the

⁵⁴ The Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone, Peace Agreement Between The Government Of Sierra Leone and The Revolutionary United Front Of Sierra Leone. <http://www.sierra-leone.org/lomeaccord.html>.

⁵⁵ United Nations, Eighth Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Monitoring Mission in Sierra Leone, Report, New York: United Nations, September 28, 1999.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

location of DDR camps, which were determined by the government of Sierra Leone.⁵⁷ The National Committee on Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (NCDDR) was created to oversee this process. The government's DDR strategy was to build and complete the DDR process in the combatants' core areas.⁵⁸ Accordingly, camps were established at Lungi, Port Loko, Daru, Kenema, Makeni and Magburaka by January 2000.⁵⁹ The camps at Makeni, Magburaka, Kenema, and Daru were especially deep in rebel territory.

The initial UNAMSIL deployment was to Lungi, Port Loko, Lunsar, Masiaka, Makeni, Magburaka, Kenema and Daru.⁶⁰ Six of these eight initial sites were DDR locations. Only Lunsar and Masiaka were guarded for military reasons. These were key road junctions between Makeni-Magburaka and Port Loko-Lungi. The UN force size and its deployment in battalion or smaller units deep into rebel territory were driven by DDR requirements in Lomé and the assumption that ECOMOG would be persuaded to fill the role defined for it in the agreement.

C. ACTUAL CONDITIONS

Before and during the initial deployment there were indications that the assumptions UNAMSIL was based upon were not correct. Between July 1999, when Lomé was signed, and November 1999, when UNAMSIL began deploying, events on the ground did not go as expected. Additional ECOMOG troops failed to materialize and Nigeria could not be convinced to stay. On August 19, 1999, President Obasanjo wrote to the UNSG that he planned to withdraw 2,000 Nigerian troops per month beginning immediately and ending in December, virtually eliminating the Nigerian presence.⁶¹ The

⁵⁷ The Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone, Peace Agreement Between The Government Of Sierra Leone and The Revolutionary United Front Of Sierra Leone. <http://www.sierra-leone.org/lomeaccord.html>.

⁵⁸ United Nations, Eighth Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Monitoring Mission in Sierra Leone.

⁵⁹ United Nations, Second Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, Report, New York: United Nations, January 11, 2000.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ United Nations, Eighth Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Monitoring Mission in Sierra Leone.

first Nigerian troops left on August 31, after which Kabbah persuaded Obasanjo to suspend the drawdown until October.⁶² Nigeria expressed a willingness to provide troops for UNAMSIL, and the UN planned to absorb other ECOMOG troops as well. But these troops would be part of the UNAMSIL force, bound by the UNAMSIL mandate, not security providers. Despite clear evidence that ECOMOG would be going away, the Security Council issued UNSCR 1270 in October 1999, establishing a UNAMSIL mandate that mirrored the UNSG's CONOPS from September and assumed a large ECOMOG security force.⁶³ In early January 2000 two Nigerian battalions transferred to UNAMSIL and two more withdrew. Nigeria planned to withdraw two more in late January and the rest by the end of February.⁶⁴ The remaining ECOMOG forces were also on track to withdraw by the end of February. In mid-January, ECOMOG forces had dropped to 4792 and UNAMSIL had deployed 5 of 6 battalions for a total of 4,819 troops. Nigeria delayed its remaining drawdown and loaned UNAMSIL two infantry battalions and a tank company for 90 days to give the UN more time to stand up.⁶⁵

During the first three months of the UNAMSIL deployment, conditions on the ground continued to deteriorate as ECOMOG withdrew. The plan envisioned in Lomé was no longer possible. For reasons that remain unclear UNAMSIL did not re-evaluate its plans in light of these problems, instead proceeding with its original plan. During the initial UNAMSIL deployment, the RUF preyed upon people that entered its territory and did not honor the provisions in Lomé that guaranteed freedom of movement to ECOMOG, the UN, and humanitarian groups. In November the RUF denied UNAMSIL and ECOMOG access to RUF-controlled territory to perform cease-fire monitoring duties. It also briefly detained UNAMSIL patrols at Segbwema and Buedu and warned

⁶² United Nations, Eighth Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Monitoring Mission in Sierra Leone.

⁶³ United Nations, United Nations Security Council Resolution 1270, Resolution, New York: United Nations, October 22, 1999.

⁶⁴ United Nations, Second Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone.

⁶⁵ United Nations, Third Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, Report, New York: United Nations, March 7, 2000.

that no movement could take place without its permission.⁶⁶ Sam Bockarie, a regional RUF leader, stated on November 29th that UN peacekeepers were not welcome in his territory.⁶⁷ On December 6, the RUF detained two members of Doctors Without Borders in Buedu for 10 days.⁶⁸

From January to March, the detentions and blocking of movement continued as UNAMSIL units began to replace withdrawing ECOMOG units. On January 5, 2000 a Kenyan Battalion was blocked by the RUF from deploying to Makeni. After an armed standoff, the Kenyans withdrew.⁶⁹ Detentions grew more serious when on January 10 the RUF ambushed a Guinean ECOMOG convoy and took vehicles, weapons and ammunition. On January 18, it disarmed and detained another 14 ECOMOG troops who were supporting a humanitarian NGO convoy. On January 31, another group of Kenyan troops were ambushed, disarmed, and detained near Makeni.⁷⁰ On February 23, a convoy of Indian troops trying to move from Kenema to Daru was stopped by a large group of heavily armed RUF forces. The convoy was reinforced by Ghanaian troops and the standoff continued for two days before the convoy returned to Kenema.⁷¹ On February 29 RUF members refused to let a UN helicopter land at Magburaka.⁷² On March 7, the RUF again detained several NGO employees near Alikalia.⁷³ In early to mid-March, RUF rebels blocked several efforts by Indian UNAMSIL troops to get patrols through to Kailahun. These incidents were all clear violations of the terms of Lomé.

⁶⁶ United Nations, First Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, Report, New York: United Nations, December 6, 1999.

⁶⁷ "UN Troops Arrive in Sierra Leone." *BBC News*, November 30, 1999, accessed June 28, 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/543292.stm>.

⁶⁸ United Nations, First Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone.

⁶⁹ "Sierra Leone Rebels Block UN troops." *BBC News*, January 5, 2000, accessed on June 29, 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/592328.stm>.

⁷⁰ United Nations, Third Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ United Nations, Fourth Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, Report, New York: United Nations, May 19, 2000.

The RUF also engaged in a series of attacks to expand and defend the territory under its control. In October 1999, it took Makeni, Lunsar, and Rogberi from the AFRC.⁷⁴ When serious fighting broke out between the RUF and AFRC in Bafodia and Kabal in March 2000, ECOMOG had been reduced to a skeletal presence.⁷⁵ (The last troops left Freetown at the end of April.) UNAMSIL sent two Kenyan platoons to de-escalate the confrontation, but fighting continued intermittently for a week until the AFRC was defeated, its commander agreeing to disarmament and relocation to Lungi.⁷⁶ The UN had failed in de-escalating the violence or preserving the balance between the forces. This was a serious victory for the RUF, which now controlled the north as well as the east. Rather than preparing for demobilization, the RUF was strengthening its position.

These violations of the peace accord demonstrated several things. First, the RUF clash with the AFRC in the north demonstrated willingness to continue expanding and gaining more territory, which was explicitly banned in Lomé. Second, the RUF would not shy away from confrontation with UNAMSIL. Third, the UN had no freedom of movement anywhere in the east. Simply put, the sections of the Lomé Peace Accords that guaranteed security and freedom of movement were being ignored. More troubling than the RUF's lack of commitment to Lomé was UNAMSIL's inability to stand up to the RUF. It was showing that there was no price to challenging the UN.

The aggressive DDR program spelled out in Lomé and the original UNAMSIL CONOPS did not go as planned either. There was no rapid, willing demobilization. The Sierra Leone government and the UN began to meet increasing resistance from the RUF. The RUF consistently interfered with or blocked DDR attempts in its territory. In the first two months that it was open, the Daru site (in RUF controlled territory) had no participation as RUF leader Sam Bockarie ordered RUF not to disarm and the CDF

⁷⁴ United Nations, First Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ United Nations, Fourth Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone.

refused to disarm if the RUF did not.⁷⁷ On April 22, 40 armed RUF members demonstrated against DDR in Makeni. The rebels also set up a checkpoint near the DDR camp (that was removed later due to UN pressure). RUF harassment of local DDR employees forced them to leave the camp. On April 22 in Magburaka 20 armed RUF prevented UNAMSIL observers from entering the DDR reception center.⁷⁸ As of May 2000, 24,042 troops had been disarmed: 4,949 RUF, 10,055 ex-SLA and 9,038 CDF. This shifted the balance of armed groups in favor of the RUF. Only 10,840 total weapons had been turned in, many of low quality.⁷⁹ This shows that the RUF was intentionally keeping its fighting strength up while its opponents became weaker.

D. FAILURE TO CHANGE UNAMSIL

As the RUF ceasefire violations piled up and provided warnings that there was no peace to keep, UNAMSIL remained focused on getting back on the track laid out in Lomé. It dedicated significant time and attention to the establishment and staffing of the various bodies created by Lomé, and attended several regional meetings whose main purpose was to develop plans to get Lomé back on track and to urge combatants to cooperate. The UN continued to see its purpose as providing security for DDR and implementing the political and human rights aspects of Lomé, believing that a successful DDR program would lead to de-escalation and then stabilization. It saw the reformed SLA as ultimately responsible for state security and UNAMSIL as a temporary expedient that would be withdrawn after elections.⁸⁰ In his report on March 7, 2000, the Secretary-General reiterated what he considered the UNAMSIL role:

One of the main priorities for the United Nations in Sierra Leone remains the speedy establishment of a credible peacekeeping presence throughout the country to create the necessary climate of confidence and security conditions for the implementation of various aspects of the peace process. UNAMSIL and the

⁷⁷ "UN Troops Arrive in Sierra Leone." *BBC News*, November 30, 1999.

⁷⁸ United Nations, Fourth Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ United Nations, Second Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone.

Secretariat are doing everything possible to accelerate the attainment of this objective and the Sierra Leonean parties, in particular RUF, must provide their full cooperation to UNAMSIL and unconditional access to all parts of the country. It should be borne in mind that the deployment of UNAMSIL is not a goal in itself, nor is it directed against or designed to favour one party. Through the security it provides, UNAMSIL is to create the conditions for all Sierra Leonean parties to disarm and bring national reconciliation and the peace process to a successful conclusion.⁸¹

The UN saw challenges and detention by the RUF as misunderstandings or aberrations that would go away, not part of a trend or testing of resolve. The UN did not seek to aggressively establish its credibility and ability to deter threats. It instead sought to use engagement and pressure to convince the RUF to follow the Lomé agreement. The JMC issued strong statements condemning the ceasefire violations. Adeniji also made public statements condemning the violations. Regional leaders were prevailed upon to exert pressure on the rebel leadership. The UN also ensured that the CMCs had AFRC and RUF members added quickly in an effort to win acceptance for them.⁸² After the RUF detained the Guineans and stole their equipment, UNAMSIL, ECOMOG, and members of the national DDR commission pressured Sankoh to return the equipment. Sankoh initially agreed, but later claimed that the RUF had not taken anything.⁸³ The general UNAMSIL response to illegal roadblocks and detentions at this time was to avoid confrontation, withdraw if possible, and surrender rather than fight. These methods appear to have done little to discourage defiance from the RUF; in fact they encouraged it as future events would demonstrate.

A robust ECOMOG force acting aggressively had been necessary to defend Freetown from the AFRC/RUF attack in 1999. The aggressive ECOMOG counterattack had been a major factor in pushing the RUF back to where Lomé was possible. ECOMOG had taken tremendous casualties and fought fiercely. After Lomé, and both before and during the UNAMSIL standup, ECOMOG troops had been challenged and

⁸¹ United Nations, Third Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone.

⁸² United Nations, First Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone.

⁸³ United Nations, Third Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone.

had shown a willingness to fight back even while taking casualties.⁸⁴ The UN, on the other hand, had given the RUF reason to believe that it would always choose to withdraw when challenged. Deterrence evaporated as ECOWAS withdrew.

The UN responded to the ECOMOG drawdown by assuming some of its duties, but not its full role. The Secretary-General requested that UNAMSIL be increased to 10,000 troops and the mandate expanded to “assume the functions now performed by ECOMOG, in particular the provision of security at Lungi airport and at key installations, buildings and government institutions in and around Freetown.”⁸⁵ In his report of January 2000, the Secretary-General discussed other ECOMOG tasks that UNAMSIL would be expected to carry out including increased security responsibilities at DDR sites, weapons destruction, and assisting in “the free circulation of people and goods and the delivery of humanitarian assistance along selected key roads.”⁸⁶ The Secretary General added however that “these tasks would not fundamentally change the nature of the mandate, which is based on the requirement in article XVI of the Lomé Agreement for a neutral peacekeeping force.”⁸⁷ He also added later that UNAMSIL would “be expected to continue to function with the cooperation of the parties.”⁸⁸ These proposed mandate changes show that while UNAMSIL was to get larger and take on some ECOMOG tasks, the UN still viewed the purpose as neutral peacekeeping in an environment with consent. This was very different from what ECOMOG had been doing before Lomé, which was peacemaking.

The new mandate adopted in February increased troop strength, as requested, and included provisions to “provide security at key locations and Government buildings, in particular in Freetown, important intersections and major airports, including Lungi

⁸⁴ United Nations, First Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone; “Rebels, Troops Clash in Sierra Leone.” *BBC News*, December 1, 1999, accessed on June 29, 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/592328.stm>.

⁸⁵ United Nations, First Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, Report, New York: United Nations, December 6, 1999.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

airport” and “facilitate the free flow of people, goods and humanitarian assistance along specified thoroughfares.”⁸⁹ The secretary-general’s request to include extensive and frequent patrols was not granted. Nothing in the new mandate was nearly as strong as the ECOWAS requirement to ““maintain the peace and security of the Sierra Leonean State.”⁹⁰ The CONOPS presented by the Secretary-General called for 12 infantry battalions distributed in four sectors, Freetown, Lungi/Port Loko, Makeni/Magburaka/Koidu, and Bo/Kenema/Kailahun. Each battalion would be primarily responsible for the DDR sites and the lines of communication in their sector. This would essentially make 6,000 troops responsible for the key RUF areas in the north and east and another 6,000 responsible for the west. Given the experience of ECOMOG, this would only be sufficient if the rebels cooperated. The UN’s entire strategy was based upon hope that Lomé would hold and there would be a peace to keep.

The UN force was consistently noted for being under-trained, under-equipped, and logistically weak.⁹¹ By the time the last ECOMOG troops departed on May 2, 2000, the UNAMSIL force was over 8,000.⁹² The UN footprint continued to grow as ECOMOG was replaced by UNAMSIL at Mange and Kambia and UNAMSIL pushed out to Kabala in the North, Joru near the Liberian border, and Kailahun in the far east near the Guinean border.⁹³ UNAMSIL was unable to establish a presence in the Kono district, but did make successful patrols to Koidu. By May the approximately 8,000 UN troops were spread across 17 sites throughout the country. The UN was numerically inferior to the RUF and had demonstrated an inability to move about freely. This meant that if it was attacked in force, it was unlikely to be able to get reinforcements or supplies to isolated troops. Command and control was also inadequate for a force spread over the

⁸⁹ United Nations, United Nations Security Council Resolution 1289, Resolution, New York: United Nations, February 4, 2000.

⁹⁰ United Nations, Eighth Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Monitoring Mission in Sierra Leone.

⁹¹ “Fears for UN Mission in Sierra Leone.” *BBC News*, May 6, 2000, accessed on June 29, 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/738967.stm> ; “Can the UN force restore peace?” *BBC News*, May 9, 2000, accessed June 29, 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/742196.stm>.

⁹² This was due to the addition of the ill-fated Zambian battalion

⁹³ United Nations, Fourth Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone.

whole country.⁹⁴ Until May, none of the troops except the Indians were capable of operating effectively on their own.⁹⁵ Despite this, it pushed forward with peacekeeping plans that would leave them more exposed.

The UN believed that the presence of peacekeepers would allow DDR to proceed and de-escalate the conflict. There were several warnings that the RUF saw its presence as a threat. Sankoh's and Bockarie's earlier statements had shown this. The RUF's continued resistance to the UNAMSIL deployment to these areas and to DDR should have been a warning that further deployment was not likely to be tolerated. UNAMSIL had tried unsuccessfully to deploy to Koidu several times and some patrols there eventually. The month before the crisis started, Jetley publicly stated that his goal was to establish a permanent UNAMSIL presence at Koidu in the Kono district.⁹⁶ Sankoh warned UNAMSIL that he would consider this deployment a provocation.⁹⁷ In military terms the diamond producing areas were the center of gravity of the RUF. The diamonds were used to purchase weapons, supplies, and other goods needed to fund their operations.⁹⁸ Securing these areas and disarming the RUF forces there would be a death blow to the RUF as a fighting force. Even without explicit warnings, Jetley and the UNAMSIL leadership should have understood that the RUF would fight hardest to defend these areas. Despite these warnings the UN did not treat deploying to Kailahun and Kono as a decisive engagement. Jetley's insistence on following the strictest interpretation of the mandate and deploying to the whole country immediately preceded and likely caused the crisis.

Several factors contributed to the UN's cognitive dissonance in regard to their plans in Sierra Leone and the situation on the ground. A combination of wishful thinking,

⁹⁴ "U.S. Plans to Help Airlift U.N. Forces Into Sierra Leone." *New York Times*, May 9, 2000, accessed August 31, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2000/05/09/world/us-plans-to-help-airlift-un-forces-into-sierra-leone.html?ref=sierraleone>.

⁹⁵ Berman and Labonte, "Sierra Leone," 167–170.

⁹⁶ Sierra-Leone.org Sierra Leone News. April <http://www.sierra-leone.org/Archives/slnews0400.html>

⁹⁷ "Sierra Leone Rebels Free Six Hostages" *BBC News*, May 5, 2000, accessed June 29, 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/737698.stm>.

⁹⁸ Gberie, *A Dirty War in West Africa*, 183.

inertia, and internal dysfunction slowed recognition of the severity of the situation and the proper response. The secretary general's reports on the mission were for the most part optimistic. It appears the staff at headquarters was either unwilling to admit publicly that they had misjudged the situation, or was not being given accurate information to make a good decision. The UN had formed UNAMSIL out of military units that were volunteered by member states. Public admission of failure or the need to shift to a peacemaking mission might result in troops being withdrawn. By making smaller changes to the mandate, the UN was trying to allow the mission to find a way to succeed without committing itself to a much more serious course of action it might not have support for.

As far as the military units in the field, UNAMSIL was conceived as a peacekeeping operation and troops were sent by their countries to carry out that specific mission. This could account for a serious level of inertia and hesitancy to respond to threats with force. The commanders of the individual units must have been aware that they were assigned to UNAMSIL temporarily, but their career was in their own armed forces. There would be little motivation to expand their mission and take losses without explicit instructions from home.

Between March and August 2000, a comprehensive review of United Nations Peace Operations was conducted. The resultant product, the Brahimi report, identified several issues with the leadership and decision making of UNAMSIL. The report referred to command and control problems with UNAMSIL including troops that did not understand or respect the integrated chain of command or understand standard operating procedures and rules of engagement. This report also called on "national capitals to refrain from instructing their contingent commanders on operational matters."⁹⁹

The UNAMSIL command staff also suffered from internal divisions. In the midst of the crisis, Jetley wrote a confidential memo to the UN leadership in which he was extremely critical of the Nigerians in general including not only the troops assigned to UNAMSI but also, the SRSG, Adeniji, and the Deputy Force Commander (DFC),

⁹⁹ United Nations, Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations, Report, New York: United Nations, August 17, 2000.

Brigadier-General Mohamed Garba.¹⁰⁰ Jetley explicitly accused the SRSG and DFC of sabotaging the peace process and attempting to make him look bad. Whether these accusations are true, they demonstrate that at the time of the crisis UNAMSIL suffered from serious divisions and dysfunction. The timing of this memo suggests that it was intended to deflect blame or excuse poor decisions made by Jetley. Jetley did not lead the UNAMSIL troops effectively and the UNAMSIL leadership was not able to function as a coherent military staff. External communications and reports point to a staff that was fixated upon a set of milestones and frustrated by internal division and dysfunction. This organization was not likely to effectively learn or adapt as necessary. Given the obvious split between the three key leadership positions in UNAMSIL, the Secretary General may not have fully understood how great the danger was on the ground.

In July 2000, after the crisis had abated a high level investigation was conducted by Manfred Eisele.¹⁰¹ The original Eisele Report was never published, but the internal investigation Eisele conducted and the subsequent discussions among senior UN Secretariat and Security Council staff led to a wholesale re-organization of the mission in which numerous personnel resigned or were fired.¹⁰² In September of 2000, the Jetley memo was leaked to the Guardian, damaging relationships between the UN, Nigeria, India and the other troop contributing countries.¹⁰³ The most important consequence of the Eisele Report and the Jetley memo was the decision of India to withdraw its troops, including Jetley.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Major-General Vijay Jetley, "Report on the Crisis in Sierra Leone," The Sierra Leone Web, <http://www.sierra-leone.org/Other-Conflict/jetley-0500.html>.

¹⁰¹ United Nations, Fifth Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, Report, New York: United Nations, July 31, 2000.

¹⁰² John L. Hirsch, "War in Sierra Leone," *Survival*, vol 43, no.3, Autumn 2001, 158; Funmi Olonisakin, *Peacekeeping in Sierra Leone: The Story of UNAMSIL* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2008), 91.

¹⁰³ Chris McGreal, "Nigerian Peace Force Accused of Sabotage," The Guardian, September 14, 2000. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2000/sep/14/sierraleone.unitednations>.

¹⁰⁴ Doyle and Sambanis, *Making War and Building Peace*, 305.

E. THE CRISIS

The UN's inappropriate strategy and ineffective adaptation caught up with it when the final ECOMOG troops withdrew. The crisis began when a group of RUF fighters demanded that the Makeni DDR center turn over five RUF members and the UN disarmament personnel that had received them. The UNAMSIL troops would not let the RUF fighters into the camp and tried to engage them in talks. The RUF group became violent and detained three UN observers and four Kenyan peacekeepers, destroyed part of Makeni camp and looted the town. At the same time in Magburaka, a group of armed RUF troops surrounded the UNAMSIL site and its Kenyan peacekeepers.¹⁰⁵

On May 2, as the last ECOMOG troops departed, the crisis escalated and spread to the east. At Makeni, the RUF attacked the Kenyan troops, wounding two. It also attacked and overran the Makeni DDR camp while 60 Kenyans were inside. The Kenyans fled and the camp was looted and destroyed.¹⁰⁶ The RUF also tried to disarm UNAMSIL troops at Magburaka. Both sides exchanged fire all day. The RUF fired small arms, RPGs, and mortars at the Kenyan troops, injuring three. It looted and destroyed the DDR camp at Magburaka.¹⁰⁷ Trouble also began in the east on May 2. The RUF detained a UN helicopter and passengers at Kailahun; four crew members and two civilian staff were taken prisoner. Near Kailahun it set up a roadblock and detained 30 UN personnel. A 23 man Indian unit on the way from Daru to Kailahun was also detained near Kuiva.¹⁰⁸ Beginning May 2, there were constant minor clashes throughout the north at Makeni, Magburaka, Lunsar, Port Loko, Rogberi Junction, Masiaka, Mange, Kambia, Songo, and mile 91.¹⁰⁹ On May 3, the trouble continued. A Nigerian UN company was fired on in Kambia by the RUF. The Nigerians were detained and released on May 4 after being

¹⁰⁵ United Nations, Fourth Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ United Nations, Fourth Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

stripped of their weapons and uniforms. A Nigerian platoon was also fired on and surrounded at Mange.¹¹⁰

In the face of the sudden and overwhelming onslaught, the force commander tried to reinforce the positions that were under siege. The Kenyan company was brought back from Kabala to reinforce Makeni and a 100 man Indian unit was sent to Magburaka.¹¹¹ One attempted reinforcement went terribly wrong. The newly arrived Zambian Battalion was ordered to go to Makeni to reinforce that position. The Zambian convoy was stopped at a RUF roadblock and the entire 426 man convoy including part of the Kenyan headquarters that was travelling with them was taken prisoner.¹¹² On May 8, the Nigerian and Guinean troops charged with securing Masiaka were involved in a 4 hour long gun battle with the RUF, before being forced to withdraw when they ran out of ammunition. The road back to Freetown also had rebels on it and the troops had to withdraw to Bo.

Engagement and pressure would again be the UN's only immediate option. The UNAMSIL Force Commander, Jetley, asked Sankoh to release UNAMSIL personnel; he refused, accusing the UN of trying to start a war by forcibly disarming the RUF. President Kabbah asked Mike Lamin, a senior RUF leader, to persuade Sankoh to cooperate, but Sankoh made himself unavailable.¹¹³ The UNSG called for Sankoh to return to the peace process,¹¹⁴ and contacted regional leaders for help in convincing Sankoh to free the prisoners and return to the peace process. Between May 3 and 7, representatives from Liberia, Libya, Mali, and Nigeria met with Sankoh at the request of the UN.¹¹⁵ On May 4, Sankoh denied that the RUF was holding any UN personnel.¹¹⁶ On

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ "UN condemns Sierra Leone rebels." *BBC News*, May 3, 2000.
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/733828.stm>

¹¹⁵ United Nations, Fourth Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone; "Sierra Leone rebels free six hostages." *BBC News*, May 5, 2000.
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/737698.stm>

¹¹⁶ "Renewed Bid to Free UN troops." *BBC News*, May 4, 2000.
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/735633.stm>

May 5 and 6, Mr. Oluyemi Adeniji, the Secretary General's Special Representative (SRSG) met with Sankoh personally. Sankoh claimed that UNAMSIL started the crisis by forcing RUF fighters to disarm. Adeniji and the Libyan representative convinced Sankoh to read a public statement asking for the RUF to cease the attacks and release the detainees.¹¹⁷ On May 5, Sankoh also ordered the release of the captured helicopter and six UN personnel.¹¹⁸ On May 8, the Mano River Union and ECOWAS leaders attended a special summit where the attacks on the UN were condemned. The leaders called on Charles Taylor to personally work for the return of the detainees and the RUF's return to the peace process.¹¹⁹ All of this diplomatic maneuvering produced very little: 6 personnel and a helicopter were released, but over 500 UN personnel and a large amount of weapons and vehicles remained in RUF hands.

Numerous interviews and news reports indicated that the people had lost confidence in UNAMSIL.¹²⁰ During the first week of May, citizens of Sierra Leone, and residents of the Freetown in particular, were afraid that the RUF would take over the country. There was little confidence in the UN's ability to it or protect the people. On May 6 the UN lost contact with several units on the main road to the Freetown peninsula from the east within 20km of the capital and mistakenly assumed they had been overrun. When it announced this, there was panic in the streets.¹²¹

¹¹⁷ United Nations, Fourth Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone.

¹¹⁸ "Sierra Leone Rebels Free Six Hostages." *BBC News*, May 5, 2000.
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/737698.stm>

¹¹⁹ United Nations, Fourth Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone.

¹²⁰ "Sierra Leone Rebels Thwart UN." *BBC News*, March 14, 2000.
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/677447.stm>; "Fear and Anger in Freetown." *BBC News*, May 9, 2000.
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/742333.stm>; Chris McGreal, "UN to Sack its General in Sierra Leone," *The Guardian*, June 27, 2000. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2000/jun/27/sierraleone.debtrelief>; Gberie, *A Dirty War in West Africa*, 167.

¹²¹ "United Nations: Desperately Needing help." *BBC News*, May 9, 2000, accessed June 29, 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/741476.stm>.

; "UK Taskforce Sent to West Africa." *BBC News*, May 7, 2000, accessed on June 29, 2010, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/740056.stm.

; "UK orders Sierra Leone Evacuation" *BBC News*, May 8, 2000, accessed June 28, 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/740384.stm>.

On May 8, 40,000 protesters marched on Sankoh's house to protest what they thought was his attempt to take over the country. The protest was organized partially by members of parliament, but was composed of citizens of Freetown, ex-SLA, Kamajors, and regular people.¹²² Many were calling for Sankoh and the RUF to be disarmed by force.¹²³ Rocks were thrown and the 75 UN troops guarding the house fired into the air to try to disperse the crowd. The RUF guards inside the house then fired into the crowd with automatic weapons and RPGs, killing 19 and wounding 40.¹²⁴ Armed men in the crowd then fired back. Sankoh fled and the crowd overran the house and killed several bodyguards.¹²⁵ The police who responded found evidence that Sankoh had been selling diamonds illegally and buying weapons. There was enough evidence in the case for the police to arrest Mike Lamin and other RUF leaders in Freetown.¹²⁶ Everyone but the UN had run out of patience with the RUF's delays and blocking of the DDR program and wanted it forcibly disarmed. There was no more peace to keep and UNAMSIL would not be trusted until something changed.

F. CONCLUSION

From the initial UNAMSIL deployment through May 8, 2000, the UN followed a strategy of neutral peacekeeping as if they had the consent of all sides. Despite many statements and acts by the RUF demonstrating a lack of consent, unwillingness to disarm, and unwillingness to follow the peace deal, the UN maintained this strategy. Separation of the combatants and rapid voluntary disarmament were the primary goals. Violations of the ceasefire were addressed using engagement, diplomacy, and pressure from regional leaders, not action. These methods failed and UNAMSIL lost credibility each time their

¹²² "Sierra Leone Protesters Shot" *BBC News*, May 8, 2000.
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/740844.stm>

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ "Where is Foday Sankoh?" *BBC News*, May 10, 2000.
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/743512.stm>

¹²⁵ "Gunmen Fire on Protesters in Sierra Leone" *New York Times*, May 8, 2000.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2000/05/09/world/gunmen-fire-on-protesters-in-sierra-leone.html?ref=sierraleone>

¹²⁶ "Gunmen Fire on Protesters in Sierra Leone" *New York Times*, May 8, 2000.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2000/05/09/world/gunmen-fire-on-protesters-in-sierra-leone.html?ref=sierraleone>

¹²⁶ Ibid.

troops were disarmed or turned back. To the individual RUF fighter and their leadership on the ground it appeared as if there were no repercussions from challenging the UN. The defiance and aggression of the RUF escalated as UNAMSIL failed to exact any kind of cost for cheating on the Lomé agreement.

UNAMSIL leadership used poor judgment in planning and executing operations with a force that was unwilling or unable to carry it out. They attempted to execute a strategy that relied upon consent that was lacking. They expanded in a way that would lead to violence, but did not prepare accordingly. This strategy was not changed until the RUF resumed open warfare and the state itself was threatened. Perhaps a new strategy would have different results.

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III. THE RESPONSE

A. INTRODUCTION

In response to the crisis, UNAMSIL made fundamental changes at the strategic and tactical levels in response to realities on the ground, which established its credibility and ability to deter attacks. It changed the mission from peacekeeping to peace enforcement, and its alignment from neutral to pro-government. Its tactics and response to threats and hostile acts also became more aggressive as it focused on securing itself and government controlled areas, resisting RUF advances, and retaking key territory when necessary. The UN had considerable help from the UK, but these internal changes ultimately established the UN's credibility, which contributed to its success.

B. IMMEDIATE RESPONSE

The UN's immediate response to the crisis was to withdraw to a defensible area, to cooperate with all parties defending the capital area, and to respond to aggression with force. These changes would later be reflected in the UN's official revised strategy. On May 9, UNAMSIL found itself with 8,700 troops spread around Sierra Leone under assault by 15,000 armed RUF.¹²⁷ Its immediate reaction was to consolidate troops in safe locations. All troops that were able withdrew to Freetown to avoid being taken hostage. The Indian units at Kailahun remained surrounded by RUF, but not under attack; they held their ground successfully for months.¹²⁸

¹²⁷ Perlez, Jane and Christopher S. Wren. "U.N. Reports Rebels Now Hold 300 of Its Troops in Sierra Leone." *New York Times*, May 6, 2000, accessed September 2, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2000/05/06/world/un-reports-rebels-now-hold-300-of-its-troops-in-sierra-leone.html?ref=sierraleone>; Onishi, Norimitsu. "Sierra Leone Rebels Halted Near Capital but Active Elsewhere." May 12, 2000, accessed August 28, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2000/05/12/world/sierra-leone-rebels-halted-near-capital-but-active-elsewhere.html?ref=sierraleone>; "Sierra Leone: The Balance of Forces." *BBC News*, May 10, 2000, accessed June 28, 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/743718.stm>.

¹²⁸ Harden, Blaine and Christopher S. Wren. "U.S. Plans to Help Airlift U.N. Forces into Sierra Leone." *New York Times*, May 9, 2000, accessed on August 28, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2000/05/09/world/us-plans-to-help-airlift-un-forces-into-sierra-leone.html?ref=sierraleone>; United Nations. Fourth Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone. Report. New York:United Nations, May 19, 2000.

Britain sent a large task force to Sierra Leone, Operation Palliser, with the stated goal of protecting and evacuating UK, Commonwealth, and EU citizens. The 800-man 1st Battalion of the Parachute Regiment arrived on May 8 and 9.¹²⁹ A six-ship naval task force that included an aircraft carrier equipped with attack planes and a helicopter carrier arrived on May 14.¹³⁰ The UK Foreign Minister allowed that securing the Lungi and west Freetown areas to evacuate EU citizens would also help additional UN troops arrive safely.¹³¹ On May 11, with the evacuation complete, the British were still controlling access to the west side of Freetown where the UN was located and appeared to be actively defending the Freetown area.¹³² UK and UN troops had also acted together to bolster the defense of the approaches to Freetown such as Hastings and Waterloo.¹³³ The UN then asked the British to stay on and assist the peacekeeping force.¹³⁴ They agreed to stay until mid-June, when the UN force would be fully reinforced, and Operation Palliser's mission was formally broadened to include securing the Lungi airport while the UN force was built up and providing technical and logistical support to UNAMSIL.¹³⁵

¹²⁹ "UK Taskforce Sent to West Africa." *BBC News*, May 7, 2000, accessed on June 29, 2010, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/740056.stm; "UK Orders Sierra Leone evacuation" *BBC News*, May 8, 2000, accessed June 28, 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/740384.stm>; "Britons Evacuated from Freetown." *BBC News*, May 9, 2000, accessed June 28, 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/741277.stm>; "UK Orders Sierra Leone evacuation" *BBC News*, May 8, 2000, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/740384.stm> (accessed June 28, 2010); "Britons Evacuated from Freetown." *BBC News*, May 9, 2000, accessed June 28, 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/741277.stm>.

¹³⁰ "UK Ships Near Sierra Leone" *BBC News*, May 14, 2000, accessed June 29, 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/747200.stm>.

¹³¹ "UK Orders Sierra Leone Evacuation." *BBC News*, May 8, 2000, accessed June 28, 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/740384.stm>.

¹³² Wren, Christopher S. "U.N. Troops Brace to Defend Capital Of Sierra Leone." *New York Times*, May 11, 2000, accessed August 28, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2000/05/11/world/un-troops-brace-to-defend-capital-of-sierra-leone.html?ref=sierraleone>.

¹³³ "UN Bolsters Freetown Defences." *BBC News*, May 12, 2000, accessed June 28, 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/744390.stm>.

¹³⁴ "United Nations: Desperately Needing help." *BBC News*, May 9, 2000, accessed June 29, 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/741476.stm>.

¹³⁵ "UK Forces Out by Mid-June'." *BBC News*, May 14, 2000, accessed June 29, 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/747823.stm>; United Nations. Fourth Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone.

C. A NEW ALIGNMENT

The single greatest change the UN made after the crisis was a shift in alignment from impartiality to supporting the government. Although this shift would not be formalized until later, the effects were immediate in terms of actions and results. A key aspect of this shift was a move away from attempting to demobilize the AFRC and Kamajors to aligning with them against the RUF. The May assault on the capital led to the creation of a pro-government coalition comprised of ex-SLA, AFRC, and CDF forces. The coalition was led by President Kabbah, CDF leader Chief Hinga Norman, and former AFRC leader Johnny Paul Koroma, all of whom saw their positions threatened by the fall of Freetown to the RUF. On May 9, ex-SLA/AFRC and CDF forces began rearming and were seen heading east out of Freetown. Truckloads of Kamajors were again seen headed east toward Masiaka on May 10.¹³⁶ By May 11, the road to Freetown was secured, but there was heavy fighting 10 miles east of Waterloo where the Jordanians and Nigerians were.¹³⁷ At this point the UN, SLA, and Kamajors were cooperating to defend the Freetown area as UN, SLA, and irregulars in civilian clothes were seen

¹³⁶ United Nations. Fourth Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone; "In a Looted Sierra Leone House, The Riddle of a Rebel Chieftain." *New York Times*, May 10, 2000, accessed August 28, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2000/05/10/world/in-a-looted-sierra-leone-house-the-riddle-of-a-rebel-chieftain.html?ref=sierraleone>; Onishi, Norimitsu. "Sierra Leone Rebels Halted Near Capital but Active Elsewhere." *New York Times*, May 12, 2000, accessed August 28, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2000/05/12/world/sierra-leone-rebels-halted-near-capital-but-active-elsewhere.html?ref=sierraleone>; "In a Looted Sierra Leone House, The Riddle of a Rebel Chieftain." *New York Times*, May 10, 2000, accessed August 28, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2000/05/10/world/in-a-looted-sierra-leone-house-the-riddle-of-a-rebel-chieftain.html?ref=sierraleone>; "Refugees Arrive in Freetown." BBC News, May 10, 2000, accessed June 28, 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/742812.stm>; Onishi, Norimitsu. "Thousands Flee to Sierra Leone Capital as War Looms." *New York Times*, May 11, 2000, accessed August 28, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2000/05/11/world/thousands-flee-to-sierra-leone-capital-as-war-looms.html?ref=sierraleone>.

¹³⁷ Onishi, Norimitsu. "Sierra Leone Rebels Halted Near Capital but Active Elsewhere." *New York Times*, May 12, 2000, accessed August 28, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2000/05/12/world/sierra-leone-rebels-halted-near-capital-but-active-elsewhere.html?ref=sierraleone>.

manning checkpoints together.¹³⁸ This three-day period marked the turn of the UN mission from peacekeeping to peace enforcement.

This new focus became more formalized as the RUF was stopped and pushed back. On the night of May 12, the UN, British, and all pro-government forces held a meeting to decide what to do next.¹³⁹ With their helicopters, jets, and robust communications equipment, the British brought capabilities the government of Sierra Leone and UNAMSIL had been lacking. By May 13, the British were helping to coordinate the actions of the UN and the pro-government groups.¹⁴⁰ The pro-government forces were making progress in retaking lost territory, advancing 30 miles in a day. By May 14, pro-government forces were fighting the RUF around Masiaka and the rebels had begun to withdraw.¹⁴¹ By May 15, the situation around Freetown was stable with no RUF threat to the capital.¹⁴²

While the British provided leadership and security inside the capital and at the airport, UNAMSIL and the local pro-government forces would be responsible for the rest of the country. These forces soon proved willing and able to defend themselves and reinforce positions that were under attack outside of the Freetown area as well. Early on May 11, RUF attacked the UN at Port Loko using captured armored cars, but the UN troops were prepared and suffered no casualties.¹⁴³ On May 12, the RUF attacked Mile

¹³⁸ Onishi, "Sierra Leone Rebels Halted Near Capital but Active Elsewhere."

¹³⁹ Onishi, Norimitsu. "Threat Eases As U.N. Adds To Peace Force In Sierra Leone." *New York Times*, May 13, 2000, accessed August 28, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2000/05/13/world/threat-eases-as-un-adds-to-peace-force-in-sierra-leone.html?ref=sierraleone>.

¹⁴⁰ "UK Ships Near Sierra Leone" *BBC News*, May 14, 2000, accessed June 29, 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/747200.stm>.

¹⁴¹ "Rebels Lose Sierra Leone town." *BBC News*, May 14, 2000, accessed June 29, 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/747706.stm>; Onishi, Norimitsu. "Rebel Group in Sierra Leone Frees 18 U.N. Peacekeepers." *New York Times*, May 15, 2000, accessed August 28, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2000/05/15/world/rebel-group-in-sierra-leone-frees-18-un-peacekeepers.html?ref=sierraleone>.

¹⁴² United Nations. Fourth Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone.

¹⁴³ Onishi, Norimitsu. "Sierra Leone Rebels Halted Near Capital but Active Elsewhere." *New York Times*, May 12, 2000, accessed August 28, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2000/05/12/world/sierra-leone-rebels-halted-near-capital-but-active-elsewhere.html?ref=sierraleone>.

91 from two sides, but the UN troops supported by Kamajors were able to defeat the rebels after a three hour fight.¹⁴⁴

The shift to a peacemaking role in support of the government also effectively changed the force level. While precise numbers of CDR and former AFRC fighting alongside UNAMSIL are not known, they had combined for over 20,000 troops when Lomé was signed and were by all reports were clearly significant in the short period of time after the crisis. In many ways the situation resembled 1998 when the Nigerian led ECOMOG had worked with the Kamajors to push back the RUF and SLA. For this period of time the UN was not the sole peacekeeping force, but was part of a larger peacemaking force. These changes simultaneous changes in mission and force level make a direct analysis of the impact of a changing force size on security difficult.

On 13 May, the Joint Implementation Committee met in Freetown to discuss the situation and the response. Representatives from the governments of Sierra Leone, Mali, Liberia, Ghana, Guinea, Libya, the U.S., the UK, and UNAMSIL attended. The strategy decided upon by the committee was to be a dual path approach. All parties would work to apply diplomatic pressure on the RUF while UNAMSIL would be enhanced to show military strength.¹⁴⁵ This strategy would be used with only slight modifications until the end of the war.

In his report issued on May 19, Secretary-General Kofi Annan officially changed UNAMSIL from a peacekeeping to a peacemaking operation. Annan explained that UNAMSIL's initial plan had been based on "the cooperation of the parties and a generally permissive environment."¹⁴⁶ Since those conditions did not exist, the UN's goal should be "the restoration of conditions conducive to a resumption of the peace process."¹⁴⁷ Annan then laid out UNAMSIL's new concept of operations (CONOPS).

¹⁴⁴ "Rebels Halt Advance on Freetown." *BBC News*, May 12, 2000, accessed June 28, 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/745706.stm>.

¹⁴⁵ United Nations. Fourth Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone.

¹⁴⁶ United Nations. Fourth Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

UNAMSIL should be immediately reinforced to 13,000 troops to defend Lungi, Freetown, and strategic locations in the west and south. UNAMSIL should later expand “with sufficient strength to stabilize the situation in Sierra Leone.”¹⁴⁸ Required military strength based upon the RUF’s use of guerilla tactics and the challenging terrain in the country. The secretary-general’s guidance was to “deploy with due care and preparation, in sufficient numbers and backed up by adequate military means to deter attacks and, if necessary, respond decisively to any hostile action or intent.”¹⁴⁹ UNAMSIL had always had a right to self-defense, but this was the first time that deterrence and response to hostile intent had been added.

The details of the CONOPS sent a strong signal about the UN’s resolve in Sierra Leone, even if they did call for troops and equipment that were not available at the time. The new operation would have two phases. First, UNAMSIL would consolidate units at Lungi, Freetown, and key locations on the roads to the capital. The purpose would be to protect the government institutions and civilians in Freetown and to deter RUF attacks on other areas under government control. Next, UNAMSIL would “stabilize the situation in the country and assist the Government to restore law and order in the areas outside the control of the RUF.”¹⁵⁰ In order to do this, UNAMSIL would need to add troops and equipment before gradually expanding to strategic locations in the west and south such as Port Loko, Rogberi Junction, Masiaka, Mile 91, Moyamba, Kenema, and Daru. In order to pursue the second phase, UNAMSIL would add a two infantry battalions, artillery, helicopters, patrol boats, as well as support units such as logistics, communications, intelligence, medical, and command. UNAMSIL’s total strength would be 15 infantry battalions and 16,500 personnel.¹⁵¹ An important point of emphasis in the new CONOPS was periodic review and modification to the UN’s plan based upon progress made and the conditions on the ground. Periodic review would allow UNAMSIL to be more nimble and refine their strategy as changing conditions dictated.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ United Nations. Fourth Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

It is noteworthy that the mandate UNAMSIL operated under had not yet changed and would not change until August. The secretary general found space within the existing mandate for these CONOPS. This lends credence to the argument that mandate interpretation is as important as the mandate itself.

D. RESULTS

During the initial recovery from the crisis, UNAMSIL acted differently than before. Threats were no longer met with attempts at de-escalation. It no longer surrendered if confronted. Although there was an initial increase in violence, it soon died down. This is in contrast to the escalating violence that followed every act of weakness leading up to the crisis. At this stage, the mandate remained the same; the only thing that changed was how UNAMSIL leadership on the ground interpreted and acted under the existing mandate. Alignment with the government and willingness to fight back when challenged are closely correlated to the end of RUF attacks. From late May to early July, the pro-government coalition fought to retake territory captured by the RUF during the crisis and the RUF responded with counterattacks on the pro-government coalition and UNAMSIL. UNAMSIL defended itself effectively and re-took lost ground when the RUF pushed the pro-government forces back. On May 3, the RUF drove the SLA out of Rogberi, but UNAMSIL re-took the town with a robust counterattack on June 2.¹⁵² Pro-government forces capitalized on the RUF defeat and advanced to Lunsar by June 7.¹⁵³ The RUF attacked the Kenyans at Kabala on June 6th. The Kenyans successfully defended themselves with no casualties. This unit was later withdrawn because UNAMSIL would be unable to reinforce it in the event of further attacks, a sound military decision.¹⁵⁴ On May 30, the RUF ambushed a convoy escorted by the

¹⁵² United Nations. Fifth Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone; "UN troops retake key junction." *BBC News*, June 2, 2000, accessed September 1, 2000, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/775174.stm>.

¹⁵³ "Sierra Leone Army Retakes Key Town." *BBC News*, June 7, 2000, accessed September 1, 2000, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/781867.stm>.

¹⁵⁴ United Nations. Fifth Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone.

Jordanians. One Jordanian was killed and four wounded, but in contrast to earlier incidents, the Jordanians responded with force and killed almost all of the attackers.¹⁵⁵

In late June, a splinter group of the AFRC, the Westside Boys, attacked pro-government forces holding Masiaka and erected roadblocks on the roads leading to the town. The RUF then attacked in force, taking the town on July 3. UNAMSIL counterattacked and re-took the town the following day,¹⁵⁶ demonstrating that it was not only as willing to fight as the other pro-government forces, but also more capable. This engagement was less than 60 days after the nadir of the crisis and was the last time the RUF took territory from the pro-government coalition and/or UNAMSIL.

UNAMSIL still had one major military challenge: freeing the troops that had been surrounded at Kailahun since May 15.¹⁵⁷ It had been permitted to re-supply them initially, but in early July the RUF took a harder line and stopped resupply helicopters. UNAMSIL responded on July 15 by launching Operation Khukri, a robust and well-coordinated operation. First, it removed all non-combatant personnel from Kailahun in a well-timed helicopter evacuation. The troops in the UNAMSIL compound then forced their way through the surrounding rebels with the support of helicopter gunships. They later linked up with a relief column that had moved up from Daru. In the process of returning to safety at Daru the UNAMSIL column destroyed a RUF brigade headquarters in Pendembu and confiscated a considerable amount of military equipment. In the course of the operation, UNAMSIL lost one person while the RUF had very heavy casualties.¹⁵⁸ Operation Khukri accomplished its stated goals of maintaining freedom of movement and security for UN personnel, but it also demonstrated that UNAMSIL had considerable war making capabilities and would use force on a large scale when threatened. Khukri

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ United Nations. Fifth Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone; "UN Retakes Key Sierra Leone town." *BBC News*, July 4, 2000, accessed September 1, 2000, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/819195.stm>.

¹⁵⁷ United Nations. Fourth Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone.

¹⁵⁸ United Nations. Fifth Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone; UN Troops 'Destroy' Sierra Rebel HQ *BBC News*, July 16, 2000, accessed September 1, 2000, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/836573.stm>; Gberie, Lansana. *A Dirty War in West Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005: 171.

combined with the smaller engagements between May and July showed that there was now a serious price to be paid for challenging UNAMSIL. Deterrence was in place. After Operation Khukri, the UN was never seriously threatened by the RUF again.

In October the RUF began to indicate to UNAMSIL and ECOWAS that it was interested in returning to a peace process. The RUF and the government of Sierra Leone signed a ceasefire in Abuja on November 10, 2000.¹⁵⁹ Unlike earlier cease-fires, this one was permanent.

The improved credibility of UNAMSIL forces was apparent between November 2000 and February 2001 when the Indian and Jordanian contingent withdrew and UNAMSIL conducted a Relief in Place (RIP) of these units. This operation required 3,151 Indian and 1,817 Jordanians to be withdrawn in phases and replaced with troops from other countries. The operation was well executed and there was no breakdown in security despite a temporary decrease in the overall UNAMSIL strength from 12,510 in late October 2000 to 9,756 in March 2001.¹⁶⁰ Five months before, UNAMSIL's relief of ECOMOG had led to the crisis. That the RUF did not choose to attack during this time suggests that it no longer thought it could beat UNAMSIL in a fight. If troop levels had been more important than credibility, RUF attacks on the UN and the government would be expected to increase at this time.

Between January and March 2001, the RUF allowed UNAMSIL to conduct patrols along routes it had previously closed. UNAMSIL also revised its CONOPS to gradually increase its footprint as new areas were opened to them. It did not establish camps in these areas immediately. First, it conducted very strong patrols. Next, it increased the frequency of the patrols. Later, it sent out patrols to make overnight stays. Finally, when it and the RUF had developed confidence that the UN could provide security and the RUF would not commit hostile acts UNAMSIL established permanent sites in preparation for DDR.

¹⁵⁹ United Nations. Eighth Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone. Report. New York: United Nations, December 15, 2000.

¹⁶⁰ United Nations. Ninth Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone. Report. New York: United Nations, March 14, 2001; United Nations. Eighth Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone. Report. New York: United Nations, December 15, 2000; United Nations. Seventh Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone.

In May 2001, the government and the RUF agreed that the CDF and RUF should disarm simultaneously in one or two districts at a time. UNAMSIL would operate the DDR centers and see that all parties were safe. DDR re-started in Kambia and Port Loko on May 18, 2001, barely a year after the crisis ended. By the end of December the DDR process was complete and nearly 40,000 people had been processed.¹⁶¹

By the end of 2001, UNAMSIL had deployed to all of Sierra Leone and had successfully provided security for the demobilization of the RUF and the CDF. The government of Sierra Leone had begun to extend its authority to districts that had been under RUF control for years. Although Sierra Leone was far from a strong state it had been stabilized enough to begin improving. After a near disaster in May of 2000, UNAMSIL had come back and become a success story.

E. CONCLUSION

Given the addition of unknown and irregular numbers of CDR and former AFRC forces on the government's side after the crisis and the radical shift in the mission, isolating and analyzing the effect of troop levels on security is difficult. This is further complicated by the change from peacekeeping to peacemaking and back. What can be shown is that after the UN had shown it was credible they were able to reduce troop levels temporarily and not attract attacks. If the large number of pro-government forces had solely been responsible for the security turnaround those same forces would not have trusted the UN to protect them when they later disarmed and demobilized.

While other factors contributed to the turnaround, the UN's change in strategy and tactics in May of 2000 was vital to its increased credibility and the turnaround. UN at the time of the crisis did not have the ability to be a deterrent even in a limited area. When the UN realized it faced rebels who were not ready to disarm and were willing to fight to defend territory, the UN began to think of the situation in a military light and made better strategic and tactical decisions. After UNAMSIL had proven it could withstand attacks or even take the initiative and destroy RUF strongpoints they greatly increased the cost and risk of attacking UN positions and better enabled themselves to protect the areas they occupied. In military terms, UNAMSIL was a force in being.

¹⁶¹ United Nations. Twelfth Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone. Report. New York: United Nations, December 13th, 2001.

Whether or not it fought the RUF, the RUF would have to beat it to win. Since the RUF realized it could no longer beat UNAMSIL, it had to find other options, peace being the one it finally chose.

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IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. SUMMARY

UNAMSIL is a unique case in that it was created to fill a gap left by a regional force that could no longer guarantee security. While the mission was created to support Lomé, Lomé itself was created because ECOMOG planned to withdraw. The U.S., a key UNSC member, was instrumental in pushing the RUF and government of Sierra Leone into an agreement that they were not ready for, helped frame that agreement to include a UN force, and pushed the Secretariat to execute.¹⁶² The SG and his staff attempted to pull together a mission to operate in this uncertain environment while trying to persuade Nigeria and ECOMOG to stay, as called for in Lomé. From the start the strategy was based upon hope that ECOMOG would stay to provide security or that the RUF would hold to a peace agreement that was seen as overly generous to it. The mission was created from forces that had been volunteered for a peacekeeping mission, not peacemaking. The initial concept of operations was centered on supporting rapid voluntary disarmament and demobilization.

In the early months of the mission, the actual conditions on the ground moved further and further away from those in which the mission was created to operate. ECOMOG followed through with its withdrawal, and the RUF did not comply with the Lomé agreement. The UNSC responded by authorizing a size increase for UNAMSIL and changing its mandate to increase UN responsibility for security, without making security the primary focus. The UNAMSIL staff failed to recognize the seriousness of warning signs and threats from the RUF and remained focused on meeting earlier milestones. The troops failed to provide effective security at DDR sites, could not move freely throughout the country, and did not respond aggressively to threats. These failures cost the UN credibility with the local population and the RUF. A dysfunctional UNAMSIL staff did not adapt to the rapidly changing conditions or recognize the

¹⁶² Gberie, *A Dirty War in West Africa*, 156–158.

imminent threat of the full resumption of civil war. The mission leadership and the individual components of the force failed to respond adequately to the threat. The situation deteriorated further as the last ECOMOG troops departed leading to the crisis in which hundreds of UNAMSIL troops were captured and the capital area was nearly overrun.

The crisis sparked a dramatic change in UNAMSIL's strategy. The UNAMSIL staff and UNSG both recognized that peacemaking, not peacekeeping was required. The UN aligned itself with the government of Sierra Leone and cooperated in a coalition with other local forces and the British. UNAMSIL's primary focus became security of its own forces and the capital area. The entire UNAMSIL force from top to bottom became aware of the magnitude of the changed conditions and responded accordingly. The force's response to aggression and threats changed dramatically. UNAMSIL units that were attacked fought back and won, in some cases taking back lost ground. UNAMSIL conducted a well planned and executed military operation to relieve a trapped unit and effectively destroyed a major rebel headquarter in the process. After these actions RUF violence against UNAMSIL stopped. The UN achieved these results with the same force and under the same mandate that it had at the start of the crisis; the difference was in the strategy and tactics used.

B. PEACE OPERATIONS

The findings of this study shed light for our understanding of how peacekeeping works, both from a theoretical as well as a policy perspective. As a case study, UNAMSIL raises questions about the theoretical hypotheses posed by *Virginia Page Fortna* in *Does Peacekeeping Work*.¹⁶³ According to Fortna, peacekeeping works by changing the incentives of recent belligerents; reducing uncertainty and fear about the future; preventing accidents; and preventing political abuses from the parties involved. In practice, however, UNAMSIL failed to achieve those functions. The mission did little to change the incentives of the parties involved since the mission did not establish itself as credible threat to the RUF. Similarly, the peace process was eventually hijacked since

¹⁶³ Fortna, *Does Peacekeeping Work? : Shaping Belligerents' Choices After Civil War*.

RUF constantly violated the terms of the peace agreement, while the UN did little to punish those violations. This allowed it to attempt to hijack the political process as Taylor had in Liberia by blocking progress toward peace and terrorizing the population until they lost hope and accepted that letting him take over was better than continuing the war indefinitely. UNAMISIL did not serve as a source of credible information as RUF continued to have gain influence by using violence to control even more territory. In sum, peacekeeping in Sierra Leona did not work as it was intended by the UN and its supporters. Certainly, the fact that the UN mission did not work according to conventional theoretical expectations does not mean that the operation itself was a complete failure. Instead, the case here analyzed suggests that researchers and students of peacekeeping in general need to take a closer look at negative and critical cases (such as Sierra Leone) to better identify the causal mechanisms of peacekeeping. In other words, we need more empirical analysis and critical cases to understand how “peacekeeping works and when it works.”

But, was UNAMSIL a complete failure? Again, the empirical evidence here analyzed suggests that the mission had an overall mixed success in allowing moderate leaders to emerge. Before the crisis, UNAMSIL was not successful. The most extreme RUF leaders, such as Bockarie, gained ground and actively prevented their forces from demobilizing and becoming a political party. After the crisis and the military defeat of the RUF, the most radical and corrupt leaders such as Sankoh, Lamin, and Bockarie were no longer in power and more moderate leadership was eventually able to emerge. This process took time and was predicated upon the UN keeping the peace they had made. This suggests that credibility is crucial to allowing moderates rather than radicals to take leadership roles.

Perhaps the most relevant finding that this study advances is that peacekeeping is unlikely to succeed when the belligerents to a conflict continue to have incentives to fight. Indeed, UNAMSIL had little opportunity to mitigate accidental violations because RUF’s against the mission were deliberate. Treating these deliberate moves as accidents flowing from misunderstanding only made matters worse. Obviously, RUF had no intention of committing itself to the conditions set up by the peace agreement and had

strong incentives to continue fighting, despite the UN's intervention. In other words, and to put Fortna's theory in perspective, what UNMISL tells us is that success in peacekeeping is heavily dependent on the belligerents willingness to support peace efforts. Peacekeeping works only when the belligerents are genuinely willing to put their weapons aside; this usually happens when the parties to a conflict realize that military victory is simply not achievable in the short or long-run.

A second theoretical assumption common in the literature on peacekeeping argues that peaceful settlements require external guarantees and some level of enforcement to succeed, since parties often fear becoming vulnerable as a result of demobilization.¹⁶⁴ Was UNAMSIL a successful guarantor of the peace agreement? Again, the evidence suggests a mixed bag of good and evil.

UNAMSIL was initially unsuccessful as an external guarantor of the Lomé agreement. From the signing of Lomé up to the crisis there were numerous incidents and violence caused by RUF in and around the DDR centers. While the RUF leadership may not have intended to disarm in the first place, the AFRC and Kamajors that did. The AFRC, Kamajors, and some RUF had initially begun to disarm. After some early success DDR slowed. The UNAMSIL response to RUF threats and attacks was to protect those in the camps, but not to punish the RUF for breaking the peace. After several incidents the individual RUF members stopped reporting to the centers and the AFRC and Kamajors became hesitant to demobilize. It was a mistake to only focus on the immediate security inside the DDR camps. By not punishing the RUF for breaking the peace, UNAMSIL was demonstrating that they could not protect the disarmed combatants in the long term.

Nevertheless, UNAMSIL did seem to be able to guarantee the agreement after enforcement was introduced into the mission's strategy. Consistent with Walter's analysis, once UNAMSIL had committed to peace enforcement and earned credibility fighting the RUF they were much more effective in guaranteeing the final ceasefire and providing security when all sides demobilized for good. The UN was clearly on the side of the government of Sierra Leone, but had nothing to gain by harming the RUF once

¹⁶⁴ Barbara F. Walter, *Committing to peace: the successful settlement of civil war* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 3.

they did disarm. They fairly protected all former fighters who abided by the peace agreement and DDR was fast and effective the second time. This indeed suggests that enforcement is a necessary, yet not sufficient condition for success in peacekeeping, especially when the parties to a conflict are not fully committed to the agreement. But the findings in this study also suggest that timing and sequencing matter, not just force, in determining success. Enforcement often takes time to implement and coordinate; its effects are thus diffused and rarely seen in the short-run.

The UN's experience in Sierra Leone was especially relevant to the debates concerning impartiality vs. neutrality. The on-going debate among scholars of peacekeeping is that the UN is more likely to succeed at implementing peace when it maintains a neutral and impartial position vis-à-vis the belligerent groups. The perception of neutrality is said to assist the UN by providing it with a degree of trust and legitimacy vis-à-vis other external actors.¹⁶⁵ In opposition to this view, scholars such as Richard K. Betts consider that taking sides may be the only option available to the UN, especially if the overarching goal is to put an end to a conflict. From Betts perspective, peace is the outcome of military victory, in which one side politically and militarily overcomes its rivals. How did UNAMSIL perform vis-à-vis these two theoretical debates? The study of Sierra Leone reinforced the arguments developed by Betts. Lomé was an attempt to create a balanced peace by giving the RUF enough that they would not want to continue fighting. ECOMOG was supposed to be the force that discouraged the RUF from breaking the peace. In ECOMOG's absence, the UN did not fill that role. UNAMSIL's attempt to act impartially and limit the use of force encouraged the RUF to cheat without consequence. The RUF expanded their territory at the expense of the AFRC while in the presence of UN troops. The great shift for UNAMSIL came when they chose the government of Sierra Leone to be the eventual victor in the war and took actions aimed at achieving that goal. These actions earned UNAMSIL credibility and directly altered the incentives for the RUF. In sum, much to the chagrin of liberals, the lesson learned from

¹⁶⁵ Dominick Donald, "Neutral is Not Impartial: The Confusing Legacy of Traditional Peace Operations Thinking," *Armed Forces and Society* 29, no. 3 (Spring 2003): 415.

UNAMSIL is that peacekeeping is most likely to achieve its goals when the principles of neutrality and impartiality are in fact relaxed or abandoned.

Thus, far the analysis of UNAMSIL suggests that mission success is externally determined by the willingness of the belligerents (such as RUF) and by the level of enforcement. Are there any other internal factors, inherent to the UN mission that would have made UNAMSIL more successful? Indeed, the case in Sierra Leone suggests that a carefully drafted UN mandate would have made a difference. The mandate for UNAMSIL did not initially match the conditions in the field. The UNSC failed to recognize the needs and conditions in the field and thus mandated the mission with unrealistic goals. The revised mandate drafted by New York before the crisis did not explicitly go far enough in emphasizing security and deterrence. The UNAMSIL staff interpreted the new mandate as traditional peacekeeping when conditions on the ground called for peacemaking. After the crisis, the UNSG and the UNAMSIL staff recognized the hostility of the RUF and that no peace existed to keep. They interpreted their existing mandate to provide security for the government of Sierra Leone as a peacemaking force. This suggests that the level of enforcement is determined not just by the mandate, but to a degree by the staff and military units assigned to the force. A vaguely worded mandate can contribute to the kind of cognitive dissonance noted in chapter II and lead to an inappropriate response to aggression.

There is one final theoretical implication from the UNAMSIL analysis. This study suggests that the size and equipment level of a force is not as important to gaining credibility as how the force is used and how it reacts when threatened. A large and well equipped force that is passive suggests that the UN is not really committed to the mission and could be easily discouraged. Recalcitrant combatants might think they can simply wait the UN out rather than follow through with demobilization. Combatants that do want to disarm are not likely to trust a passive force to protect them, no matter how well equipped.

Given what we know thus far from UNAMSIL, the case suggests two possible areas of improvement for peacekeeping. First, establishing credibility early is key. Cheating or aggression must be countered quickly and forcefully. In cases where there is

no peace to keep and the force is smaller than ideal, they can still be effective if they are used with limited goals. A small, but focused force can still secure a strategically important area and establish itself as a credible fighting force. That credibility could carry over to a larger force to secure a larger area later.

Second, when preparing for a mission the UN must be realistic about conditions on the ground. If there is no peace to keep the mandate, should clearly reflect that situation from the start. In this case margin for error is slim and any action must be decisive and effective. The force cannot be seen or see itself as neutral or passively impartial. In order to avoid the kind of cognitive dissonance and dysfunction that plagued UNAMSIL before the crisis the force must understand from top to bottom what the mission is and what the strategy is from the start. The states providing the military units that the force is composed of would choose the units and their leadership understanding what may be required. When the units are deployed they would know what range of actions they are expected to take part in and there would be much less of a chance for division in the force. In the challenging environment of peacemaking, unity is vital to credibility.

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